

# Russian Rambo School

## Attrition, Unmanned Systems, and the Evolution of Infantry Combat

The contemporary battlespace exhibits a structural regression to positional trench warfare, combined with high-lethality unmanned systems. The convergence of deep fortifications, pervasive aerial surveillance, and precision strikes has altered ground combat geometry. Maneuver warfare, previously the foundation of Western and Russian military doctrine, is currently paralyzed. In its place, a war of tactical attrition has emerged. This conflict phase is defined by decentralized infantry assaults, First-Person View (FPV) drones, and the systematic targeting of logistical routes.

This assessment outlines the operational adaptations driving this phase of conflict. By examining the forced reorganization of Russian infantry, the mechanics of subterranean close-quarters battle, the drone warfare ecosystem, and the kinetic pressure applied to supply chains, a clearer operational picture is established.

### The Stratification of Infantry Architecture

During the initial 2022 invasion, Russian military doctrine relied on the Battalion Tactical Group (BTG) as its primary unit of action. The BTG was a mounted, mechanized combined arms unit designed for rapid maneuver and concentrated firepower. However, the formations were heavy with armor and self-propelled artillery but deficient in dismounted infantry. Lacking adequate infantry screens in contested terrain, BTGs sustained severe damage from decentralized light infantry units utilizing anti-armor guided missiles.

The losses sustained by armored formations forced a restructuring of tactical doctrine. Russian commanders abandoned the BTG concept in favor of task-organized infantry groupings optimized for static positional warfare and frontal assaults.

Russian infantry forces are currently reorganized into four functional tiers: line, assault, specialized, and disposable troops.

Line infantry units are utilized for ground-holding and defensive operations. They occupy established trench networks and maintain the zero line. They are rarely utilized in offensive breakthrough attempts due to the risk of mass casualties over open ground.

Assault infantry units, frequently operating under the "Shtorm" (Storm) designation, execute offensive maneuver. These detachments physically breach enemy trench lines and conduct close-quarters combat.

Specialized infantry operate in a protected, supporting role. This tier includes snipers, electronic warfare specialists, and anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) teams. They deploy to the rear of the assault elements to exploit vulnerabilities, providing stand-off fire support.

Disposable infantry represent an economy of force adaptation. These units, comprised of mobilized personnel or penal recruits, conduct low-level skirmishing. Their operational purpose is to advance in small groups to trigger enemy fire, thereby revealing concealed firing positions. Once positions are unmasked, Russian artillery batteries or drone swarms target the locations.

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The primary vulnerability across these fragmented units is a deficit in unit cohesion. Because the echelons are highly segregated by survivability, interoperability frequently fails under combat stress, resulting in formations that rely on mass and indirect fire rather than combined arms maneuver.

## **The "Shtorm" Phenomenon and Tactical Momentum**

The modern Russian assault detachment shares operational history with the Wagner Private Military Company (PMC), specifically during the battles for Bakhmut. Faced with static defensive lines and extensive minefields, Wagner utilized recruited convicts in continuous infantry waves. While yielding high casualty rates, the tactic exhausted defenders, depleted ammunition stockpiles, and exposed firing positions to counter-battery artillery.

The Russian Ministry of Defense subsequently scaled this attrition-based model. By April 2023, regular forces deployed formal "Storm-Z" (Шторм-Z) detachments. These units, populated by Russian prisoners promised pardons for combat service, became the vanguard of the assault echelons.

The operational environment for these units involves minimal training and high mortality rates. Logistical strain and medical triage protocols exacerbate these rates. Russian military commanders, prioritizing offensive momentum, frequently commit wounded personnel back into assault operations without adequate medical treatment. Medical evacuation procedures for disposable units are routinely deprioritized.

In late 2023, the Storm-Z designation transitioned into new "Storm-V" units. Battlefield intelligence indicates the underlying tactical philosophy remains unchanged; Storm-V penal units continue to function as the primary mechanism for high-mortality infantry assaults.

## **Subterranean Geometry and Trench Clearing Methodologies**

With maneuver warfare constrained by dense minefields and surveillance, combat relies on deeply fortified trench networks. Clearing these subterranean complexes generates high casualty rates.

The tactical difficulty stems from physical compartmentalization. Upon breaching a trench, visibility is restricted to a few meters. The narrow corridors decentralize command and control down to the individual soldier, cutting off radio communication and isolating small assault pairs. Modern trenches are built in erratic zig-zags with frequent T-intersections to contain explosive fragmentation, limit lines of sight, and force attackers into choke points.

## **Open-Source Intelligence Profile: The "Rambo School" Network**

The scale of mobilized personnel entering the Russian armed forces overwhelmed formal tactical training centers. Consequently, decentralized digital platforms, specifically specialized Telegram and VKontakte (VK) channels, emerged to disseminate close-quarters combat (CQB) protocols.

The "Rambo School" (Школа Рэмбо) serves as a primary intelligence node for this informal doctrine. It operates entirely outside the formal Ministry of Defense architecture as an

independent tactical collective. Open-source tracking of their social media presence reveals the group explicitly markets itself as an "international brotherhood of professional military personnel and mercenaries" united to "raise the level of military education and culture in the Russian Federation".

The group's self-identification as mercenaries, combined with their routine use of the violin emoji (🎻) in official communications, establishes a direct semiotic link to the Wagner Private Military Company network (colloquially referred to as "the Musicians"). Their digital footprint points to a highly structured organization designed for mass distribution and monetization. The network maintains a primary Telegram bot for recruitment, a restricted access digital "Library" for disseminating tactical manuals, and a dedicated merchandising channel.

Analysis of the group's iconography demonstrates a psychological operation aimed at establishing an irregular, survivalist ethos. The primary logo features a skull with a thick red beard, a cigar, and a red Spetsnaz-style beret bearing a Soviet star, positioned above an open book. This imagery blends traditional elite military symbolism with a piratical aesthetic. Physical displays of this branding incorporate explicit wartime identifiers. Imagery recovered from the group's channels shows the logo painted on canvas, placed behind a scale model of a T-72 main battle tank bearing the white "Z" tactical marker. Furthermore, members self-apply digital stickers labeling their organization a "Sect" (Секта), indicating a highly insular, cult-like devotion to their specific tactical methodology. The core motto, "Learn or die" (Учись или сдохнешь), frames their instruction as an absolute biological imperative for survival.

Through these channels, two primary methods for clearing a blind T-intersection within a trench have been codified and adopted by Russian assault units: the "Hook" Method (Метод «Крючок») and the "Cross" Method (Метод «Креста»).

## **Pre-Breach Protocols**

Before any entry technique is attempted, Rambo School doctrine mandates strict pre-breach discipline. Assault pairs must never approach an intersection with partially depleted magazines. Operators discard used magazines and load fresh ammunition prior to the corner breach. Weapons must be held tight to the body; extended suppressors are discouraged as they protrude past corners. A designated rear guard must continuously scan the sky to protect the assault element from FPV drone drops.

## **Method 1: The "Hook" (Метод «Крючок»)**

The "Hook" method allows a two-man assault team to simultaneously bisect both angles of a T-intersection, establishing control without exposing their backs to uncleared space. Approaching the junction, operators align in a stack against the same wall of the approach trench, halting 1 to 2 meters before the corner. They operate in a high-low configuration to avoid friendly fire. Working in synchronicity, both operators throw fragmentation grenades in high arcs into opposing branches of the intersection. The detonations are intended to neutralize combatants and initiate tripwires.

Following the blast waves, both operators execute the breach by pivoting sharply outward, "hooking" around their respective inner corners. The right operator hugs the inner right angle, and the left operator hugs the inner left angle. This method maximizes the speed of entry and allows simultaneous inspection of both threat directions. However, the moment the operators turn the corners, they instantly lose visual contact with one another, fracturing the team into two

isolated combat engagements.

## Method 2: The "Cross" (Метод «Креста»)

The "Cross" maneuver offers an alternative geometry. This technique relies on an X-shaped trajectory crossing that "cuts the pie" to suppress the enemy.

The pre-breach phase remains identical, utilizing full magazines and a dual-grenade deployment. However, the operators position themselves on opposing walls of the approach trench in a high-low tier. Upon the signal to breach, the operators execute a synchronized diagonal sprint across the open mouth of the intersection. The operator on the left wall dives diagonally into the right-hand corridor, while the operator on the right wall dives diagonally into the left-hand corridor.

The doctrine dictates strict protocols for failures. If an operator's weapon jams, they must drop to the floor of the trench, scream "Zaderzhka!" (Jam!), and allow their partner to continue. If one operator is hit, the surviving partner must instantly direct suppressive fire; stopping to administer medical aid during the breach is prohibited.

Tactical Geometry	The "Hook" Method	The "Cross" Method
<b>Spatial Distribution</b>	Operators stacked on the <i>same</i> wall, high-low tier.	Operators on <i>opposing</i> walls, high-low tier.
<b>Movement Path</b>	Linear approach, sharp outward pivots hugging inner angles.	Diagonal sprint across intersection, creating an X-shaped trajectory.
<b>Grenade Deployment</b>	Simultaneous dual deployment; high arcs into opposing corridors.	Simultaneous dual deployment; thrown deep into opposing corridors.
<b>Tactical Advantage</b>	Maximizes speed; simultaneous inspection without crossing fire lines.	Optimally cuts the corner angle; establishes earlier line-of-sight.
<b>Vulnerabilities</b>	Instantaneous loss of visual contact; isolated combat.	High risk of fratricide if synchronization fails during the cross.

## Sustaining Fire Superiority and Western Counter-Training

These clearing drills require high quantities of ammunition. Combat data indicates a single assaulting rifleman requires a minimum of 10 to 12 fully loaded magazines to sustain a localized trench clearing operation. Light Support Weapons require between 1,200 and 2,000 rounds for adequate suppression.

The demand for compact firepower has driven weapons procurement, such as the experimental Russian OTs-142. The OTs-142 is a compact, 5.45x39mm belt-fed light machine gun. It prioritizes fast reloads and high ammunition capacity within a micro-footprint, purpose-built for subterranean CQB environments.

To counter these tactics, Ukrainian troops receive specialized trench clearing training at NATO facilities, notably Camp Jomsborg in Poland. The training integrates the threat of drones, forcing infantry units to conduct live-fire maneuver and trench clearing under simulated FPV drone overwatch. Instructors induce psychological shock early in the training to prepare recruits for the

chaos of the initial breach.

## **The Unmanned Battlespace and Electronic Warfare**

Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) represent the defining technological characteristic of the conflict. Drones have transformed the airspace into a continuous surveillance zone, eradicating operational surprise.

The battlespace is dominated by First-Person View (FPV) drones. Controlled by an operator wearing virtual reality goggles, FPVs operate as highly maneuverable precision munitions. High-altitude Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) drones spot armored columns or infantry concentrations, dispatching FPV swarms to execute strikes against structural weak points.

This dynamic creates a mutually enforced kill zone extending 10 to 20 kilometers deep across the front line. Within this perimeter, visible targets are highly likely to be detected and destroyed. Up to 85 percent of Russian targets destroyed at the front have been neutralized by drones, and FPV strikes account for roughly 70 to 80 percent of total casualties in contested sectors.

The proliferation of FPVs catalyzed an arms race in counter-unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS) and Electronic Warfare (EW). Forces saturated the battlefield with EW jammers to sever radio command links. In response, drone developers implemented fiber-optic drones. By spooling a physical glass wire during flight, fiber-optic drones establish a hardlined connection that is immune to radio-frequency jamming. However, the physical drag of the wire limits velocity to 30-40 km/h and reduces maneuverability. Fiber-optic drones are primarily deployed to hunt and destroy EW emitters, clearing the airspace for standard FPVs.

Simultaneously, investment has shifted toward Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled drones capable of autonomous terminal guidance. These systems use optical recognition algorithms to lock onto a target profile, completing the attack run autonomously if the radio connection is severed by EW.

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Environmental factors also dictate drone efficacy. Spring and summer foliage reduces the operational effectiveness of high-altitude reconnaissance quadcopters, requiring a tactical pivot toward fixed-wing drone coverage and thermal imaging.

## **Logistical Interdiction and the Economic Hazard Premium**

With frontline maneuver suffocated, strategy has expanded to target the operational rear.

Disrupting Ground Lines of Communication (GLOCs) serves to starve the static zero line of fuel and ammunition.

Ukrainian forces orchestrate an intermediate and long-range strike campaign against logistics. Long-range operations, such as "Operation Spiderweb" executed by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), utilize drone swarms to strike strategic bomber bases deep inside Russian territory.

Tactical interdiction focuses on supply hubs and transportation chokepoints. Strikes on bridges force Russian logistics into predictable, vulnerable diversionary corridors. Ukrainian drone and artillery units subsequently target these convoys. Fuel infrastructure, including civilian oil depots repurposed for military use, is equally targeted to choke the supply of lubricants and diesel.

The targeting of supply lines generates secondary economic effects within the Russian military infrastructure, reflected in the financial hazard premium placed on civilian logistical personnel. Recruitment propaganda for the "Rambo School" heavily features armored fuel trucks, advertising that the salary for a fuel truck driver is higher than in assault units. Standard heavy truck drivers operating safely within the Russian Federation command an average annual salary of approximately 961,000 rubles, with civilian tank truck drivers earning roughly 758,000 rubles annually. However, drivers recruited to transport fuel into the Special Military Operation (SVO) zones are offered starting wages of 100,000 to 120,000 rubles a month, escalating to 240,000 rubles for experienced drivers with hazardous materials certifications. In areas subjected to heavy interdiction, hazard postings reach upward of 350,000 rubles monthly. This inflated compensation package functions as a direct combat hazard premium, confirming the high mortality rate among unarmored logistical convoys. The modern tactical environment demonstrates that until a technological countermeasure can reliably neutralize drone surveillance and complex minefields, warfare will remain an exercise in mechanized, positional attrition.

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